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## FOOD ADULTERATIONS.

BY W. E. MASON, UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS.

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THE United States of America, the greatest food-producing country in the world, is suffering from the adulteration of food products. The extent of this adulteration it is difficult to comprehend, but it grows largely, in fact almost entirely, out of excessive competition. There is hardly an article of food that has not been at some time more or less adulterated; flour, butter, cheese, tea and coffee, syrups, spices of all kinds, extracts, baking powders; and yet, notwithstanding this great adulteration of food, every manufacturer will testify that he is perfectly willing to stop the adulteration if his competitors will stop so that he can honestly compete with them.

This was especially true in the case of flour, and investigation during last session of Congress showed that very dangerous and absolutely insoluble substances were being used to adulterate flour, and it became very well known that this fact impaired the credit of American flour in foreign countries. The adulteration became so extensive that the manufacturers who would not use adulterants appealed to Congress for protection, and the law as applied to oleomargarine and filled cheese was made applicable to mixed flour. At the present time it is perfectly clear that the mixing of flour has practically stopped in the United States. This not only assists the honest manufacturer of flour, but it protects the consumer and at the same time gives us a reputation for manufacturing honest goods, and its influence has already been felt in our export trade to all the countries that buy our flour.

The Committee on Manufactures has had presented to it letters that come from at least twelve or fifteen of the large cities of the world, all of the same tenor and general effect as the following:

"London, October 12, 1899.

"Dear Sirs: Replying to yours of the 16th ultimo, with regard to the pure food law now in operation in your country, since this act was passed by Congress it has certainly restored confidence on this side, and in my opinion will materially assist your export trade.

"Yours faithfully,

W. M. MEESON,

"The 'Modern Miller,' St. Louis.

Per JOHN STANMORE."

It is a well-known fact that our meat products have had a greater demand and better sale since the Government undertook their inspection, and it is safe to say that nothing will more encourage our export trade than for the Government of the United States to have some standard fixed, to which the food products of the United States must rise before they can be sold to our own people or our customers abroad.

It is not the purpose of this article to go into details, either as to the different adulterations or as to the remedies proposed, but a general discussion may be advisable to give the reader an idea of the needs of legislation and of the legislation which is pending.

In the first place, it would seem apparent that national legislation is necessary, for the reason that different State Legislatures have different ideas as to food products and food standards. Take for illustration the subject of beers and malt liquors. Practically every manufacturer of these goods ships from one State to another. What would be satisfactory under the law of New York might not be satisfactory under the law of New Jersey. As a matter of fact, the Government tests and analyses that have lately been made by Dr. Wiley, the Chief Chemist of the Agricultural Department, at the invitation of the Senate Committee, show that the American malt liquors are actually superior as a rule to the imported malt liquors, and that in the language of Dr. Wiley, "out of the analysis of about fifty American beers, I think only two contained the least trace of a preservative, which is not the case in the imported beers."

Practically every manufacturer of this product is willing to have a Government standard fixed whereby the article shall contain at least a certain percentage of malt extracts, etc., but the reader can see at once the manifest injustice if one standard were to be fixed by the Government and the States fixed another standard. The law would lack uniformity in its application, and a practical law must be uniform.

The writer does not intend to say that the State Legislatures should not make their own pure food laws. On the contrary, every one of the laws so far has been successful (and about one-fourth of all the States have passed some pure food legislation in the last two years), and there are many subjects which the States can handle that cannot be reached by Congress for two general reasons. The law of Congress regulating the manufacture of food for consumption in the State where it is made would be a police regulation within the State and therefore void. In other words, the Congress can only pass laws regulating for police purposes the manufacture and sale of food products between the States.

This rule, of course, does not apply where the regulation of the food product is effected through the Revenue Department of the Government, as in the case of flour and butter. The violation of those laws would be a violation of the Revenue laws, whether the goods were sold in the same State or not.

There is a vast field for discussion under the head of "Sophistication"—including those articles of food which are simply cheapened by substances which are in themselves perfectly healthy, but frauds. If milk is diluted by water, the only danger to health is lack of nourishment, but it is also a fraud upon the consumer. If, however, it is preserved, as it is in some cases, by the use of acids, it becomes a menace to public health; and jellies and jams, when manufactured, as they are manufactured by the thousands of pounds, by the use of gelatine, vegetable dyes and natural acids, are simply a fraud; but when they are manufactured through dangerous acids, which have no place in the human economy, then a different rule should apply. Thousands of barrels of maple syrup and honey are sold that do not contain ten per cent. of maple syrup or honey, and yet the article known as glucose, and which is used to sophisticate goods, is regarded by the experts as a perfectly safe, healthy and nutritious food. This mixing or blending simply sells to the consumer what he did not intend to buy, but it does not endanger the public health. This is probably true of the adulteration of spices. From twenty to eighty per cent. of the ground spices and peppers, etc., that we get are made up of nutshells—certainly not a very desirable article of food, and yet the amount taken being so small it may not work a danger to public health.

Yet the fact remains that all these articles should be marked and branded for what they are, and a violation of that rule should

be punished by a national law. Every manufacturer should be compelled to put his own name and the date of manufacture on the package which contains his product.

The evidence is overwhelming that the goods which are put up in packages, bottles and cans that have been carelessly prepared, and the character of which the manufacturer is not willing to stand for, are marked and sold to the public under fancy and fictitious names. And the writer of this article will favor a law that every bit of prepared food exposed for sale must bear the name of the manufacturer so that the purchaser can see it when he buys. And further than this, the manufacturer who puts upon the market an article of food that is dangerous to public health ought not to be permitted to sell it, even though it is branded for what it is. Permitting poisons to be sold to the public, who have no time or opportunity to educate themselves as to the effect of poisons and drugs that are sold as foods, is simply legalizing a crime.

There has been a great desire on the part of the American public to eat and drink imported food products. Imported champagnes have been regarded as most desirable. The analyses and tests show that the genuine American champagnes that have been fermented in the bottle are superior to the imported. The same is true as to malt liquors. Among other reasons for this is the fact that the sterilizing process, invented by Pasteur, which is the mere heating of the beer in the bottle up to a certain degree to destroy the germ life, has been found sufficient to preserve the American product for American consumption, and the other producing countries of the world, which are very strict as to the manufacture of beers for their own people, do not demand the same rule and the same care if the beer is to be shipped here. The Pasteur process cannot be applied to the goods in casks, and it is not to be wondered at that the Government experts found more preservatives in imported than in the domestic goods.

Take coffee as an illustration. In Germany they select the good coffee and reject what are known as the dead or sour beans. The sour bean has a taste, but not a coffee taste. The sale of it is prohibited in Germany, but it is sold here in large quantities. It is called in the trade "black Jack," and it is mixed with our coffee and sold as coffee. This is but one article as illustration, but there are many others, and to-day I know of no country that is so strict in its food laws as to protect any but its own people.

Clearly the only remedy in this case is to prohibit the importation and sale of any article of food the sale of which is prohibited in the country from which it comes.

There has been a general awakening upon this subject throughout the United States in the past few years. Pure food congresses have met and public spirited men have joined a crusade in favor of pure foods. Legislation has been had in many States. Congress has passed some legislation. It is to be hoped that the agitation will continue until we have a system of laws which will absolutely prohibit the sale of dangerous and deleterious substances as foods, which will prohibit the importation of unhealthy or dishonest food products from other countries, which will compel the marking of every particular bottle, jar, can, etc., with the name of its true manufacturer and also a statement of what it is.

It is believed by those who have given the matter careful attention that then we will encourage the honest manufacturer and protect him from dishonest competition, we shall protect the consumer, who will know in each instance what he is buying; we shall, by establishing a reputation for a high standard of food products, increase the demand for our goods all over the world, and also, what is more important to all, we shall raise the standard of the purity of goods that go into the human stomach, and by the use of better foods, make a better citizen.

"The destiny of the nations depends upon how they feed themselves."

WM. E. MASON.